

Message Text

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16
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

EA-07 FRB-03 INR-07 IO-13 NEA-10 NSAE-00 USIA-06

OPIC-03 SP-02 TRSE-00 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01

SAM-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SS-15 /116 W
----- 063960

R 101625Z SEP 76
FM USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1825
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 2462
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L EC BRUSSELS 08848

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EEC, PO, SP
SUBJECT: SOAMES COMMENTS ON PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

1. DURING CALL ON EC COMMISSION VICE PRESIDENT SOAMES ON SEPTEMBER 10, I ASKED FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE OUTLOOK FOR ENLARGEMENT OF THE EC TO INCLUDE PORTUGAL AND SPAIN AS FULL MEMBERS. SOAMES SAID HE ANTICIPATED A FORMAL PORTUGUESE APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP "WITHIN SIX MONTHS." THOUGH FOREIGN MINISTER FERREIRA WILL BE IN BRUSSELS TO SIGN RECENTLY NEGOTIATED TRADE AND OTHER AGREEMENTS AT TIME OF SEPTEMBER 20 EC COUNCIL, SOAMES DOES NOT EXPECT MORE THAN GENERAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FUTURE RELATIONSHIP. AFTER FERREIRA HAS TOURED ALL NINE CAPITALS (PRESUMABLY LATER THIS FALL, A FORMAL APPLICATION SHOULD FOLLOW SHORTLY.

2. I ASKED HOW THE COMMISSION VIEWED THE PROSPECT OF PORTUGUESE MEMBERSHIP. SOAMES ANSWERED THAT, "IN THE LONG RUN, "MEMBERSHIP IS RIGHT, BOTH FOR PORTUGAL AND
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EUROPE. BUT IN THE SHORT TERM, GIVEN PORTUGAL'S SERIOUS

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND A DEVELOPMENT LEVEL EVEN LOWER THAN GREECE, THE PROSPECT IS TROUBLING. HE NOTED THAT THE COMMISSION, AS IT DID WITH GREECE, WILL HAVE TO OFFER AN "OPINION" TO THE COUNCIL. WHILE A PREPARATORY PERIOD PROPOSAL ALONG THE LINES IT MADE IN THE GREEK CASE MIGHT MAKE SENSE ECONOMICALLY, THE GREEK PRECEDENT, WHEN THE EC GOVERNMENTS COLLAPSED IN THE FACE OF A VIOLENT GREEK REACTION TO THAT OPINION, WOULD UNDERSTANDABLY BE MUCH IN MIND. IN ANY CASE, SOAMES NOTED, IT WILL BE UP TO THE COMMISSION THAT TAKES OFFICE NEXT JANUARY TO DEAL WITH PORTUGAL (FOR WHICH HE APPEARED RELIEVED).

3. ON SPAIN, SOAMES COMMENTED THAT FULL MEMBERSHIP, EVEN UNDER THE MOST OPTIMISTIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION IN SPAIN, WAS AT LEAST FIVE OR SIX YEARS AWAY. IT WOULD BE AT LEAST A YEAR OR TWO BEFORE ALL NINE EC GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE READY TO ENDORSE SPANISH DEMOCRACY, ANOTHER YEAR OR SO FOR THE EC TO PREPARE FOR NEGOTIATIONS (AGAIN AS WAS TRUE IN THE GREEK CASE) PLUS UP TO TWO YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS AND ANOTHER FOR RATIFICATION. IN THE MEANTIME, IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT SPAIN "REGULARIZE" ITS CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY, AND IN THESE TALKS SO FAR, HE SAID, SPAIN WAS BEING VERY DIFFICULT. HINTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, RELATIONS WITH REGIONAL ORGS, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ECBRU08848
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760343-0677
From: EC BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760974/aaaaclaz.tel
Line Count: 83
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <11 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOAMES COMMENTS ON PORTUGAL AND SPAIN
TAGS: PFOR, PO, SP, EEC, (SOAMES, CHRISTOPHER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006